

Twelve heavy years this patient soul sustain'd
 This wasp's attacks, and then her praise obtain'¹
 d,
 Grav'd on a marble tomb, where he at peace
 remained.

Much nearer home, Crabbe invites a more obvious

comparison with Cowper: there is the same fondness for quiet English country, the same fondness, alas, for mere prose in metre. As a letter-writer, Cowper must stand far higher: as a poet of landscape, and of human character, he seems to me inferior. He lacked both Crabbe's knowledge and Crabbe's strength; indeed, the mixture in him of maiden lady and hunted sheep, despite all its pathos, ends by exhausting the patience. Then there is that other far greater poet of the country and the poor, who in his flights of inspiration soars into heavens far out of sight of Aldborough Heath, but also, when inspiration leaves him, flounders almost lower, even, than Crabbe himself—

Wordsworth. Little comparison is possible, but there is one difference of some interest in its effects—the difference between Wordsworth's blank verse and Crabbe's couplet. For grand moments in the grand manner, blank verse is doubtless unsurpassable; but for general purposes it tends to lapse, as Goldsmith already saw before Wordsworth's day or Cowper's, into 'a disgusting solemnity'.

With all its faults, the couplet is far less subject to that failing. Crabbe was slovenly. He wrote too fast—six times as fast as Virgil—thirty lines a day. He never learnt

what Boileau taught Racine, not only to rhyme, but 'rimer difficilement'. As sure as fate, a 'boy' in Crabbe is doomed, if to no other 'employ', then to a 'hoy'. None the less for his purposes he chose the right measure.

He also learnt, more slowly, to choose the right method for his gifts. It was in vivid and individual detail, not in vague generalisations, that his power lay. The sublime may be vague, as the mountains and the heavens seem but